



Edgewood United Church

United Church of Christ

Rev. Karl Nicewander
Pastor

Rev. Jody Betten
Pastor

Written Testimony of

Rev. Kari Nicewander

Pastor at Edgewood United Church

Before the

Michigan House of Representatives

Families, Children and Seniors Committee

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

Chairperson Kurtz and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition of House Concurrent Resolution 11, a resolution supporting a federal 'parental rights amendment' to the United States Constitution which appears to me an attempt to undermine the United States ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

My name is Kari Nicewander and I am one of two Pastors at Edgewood United Church in East Lansing; I was asked by my friends at the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan to provide testimony on my personal and pastoral objections to HCR 11 as well as my support for the ratification of the UNCRC.

Edgewood United Church provides a space of worship for all persons and we have roughly 150 hundred families in our congregation. My friends at the ACLU have told me that last week individuals testifying before this Committee claimed that the UNCRC would fundamentally undermine families and would effectively disallow parents from parenting their children. The United Church of Christ cares deeply about the rights of children and parents, and seeks a world where all people can experience the love of God in a supportive and nurturing family.

Supporters of HCR 11 also asserted that the ratification of the UNCRC would undermine the religious education of children and religiosity in the United States more broadly. Edgewood United Church provides religious education for around 60 children and youth, including weekly Sunday school classes for infant through high school, youth group for middle and high school youth, mission trips, a sexuality education curriculum, and service learning projects for all ages.

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"We seek to be a community of healing, hope, and hospitality for people of all nationalities, races, sexual orientations, types of families, marital status, ages, and abilities."



I firmly believe that if ratified, the UNCRC would in no way adversely alter or endanger youth religious education at our Church. Furthermore, I feel the concerns regarding supposed threats towards religious instruction and American religiosity where the UNCRC to be ratified, raised by supporters of HCR 11, are baseless and unfounded.

Edgewood United Church is a Just Peace Congregation, meaning that as a congregation we feel we are called by our faith to advocate on behalf of those in need and to work towards a more just world. To this end, we support to the United States ratification of the UNCRC.

I am proud to say that as a denomination more broadly, the United Church of Christ has endorsed the UNCRC and has called on the United States to ratify the Convention.

And our denomination is not alone in our support of the UNCRC; the United Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the American Baptist Churches in the USA, the Presbyterian Church, the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America as well as the Catholic Health Association of the United States, the YMCA and YWCA, the Christian Children's Fund, Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association, Christian Children's Fund, Inc, Church Women United, the International Catholic Child Bureau of North America, Pax Christi USA, the Church World Service and the Mennonite Central Committee have all endorsed the UNCRC and have called upon the United States to ratify the Convention.

For these reasons mentioned above, I urge the Committee to not support House Concurrent Resolution 11 or any other efforts to undermine American children and families by further delaying the ratification of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Rev. Kari Nicewander